DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 396 CS 212 029

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TITLE Teaching English in Open Admissions Environments of Higher Education: A Context for Contemporary Practice.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 47p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Programs; Community Colleges; Educational Attitudes; Educational Development; English Curriculum; *English Instruction; Open Enrollment; *Teaching Methods; *Theory Practice Relationship; *Traditional Grammar; *Writing (Composition); Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Composition Theory; *Educational Issues; English Teachers

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the conflict going on within the community of English instructors concerning the value of instruction in traditional grammer and the past and present effect of certain historical processes and of the forces which shaped those processes on the techniques and methodologies of English instruction. The paper discusses the open and widely publicized philosophical struggle which erupted in the 1960s and 1970s between those who consider the teaching of traditional grammar a complete waste of time, those who consider traditional grammar indispensable to the teaching of English composition, and those whose attitudes concerning traditional grammar represent positions between these two viewpoints. The paper argues that, as a result of this conflict, the currently evolving techniques of English instruction have the potential to affect the teaching of developmental English at the community college level. The paper identifies these techniques as: (1) transformational generative grammar and its derived auxiliary, sentence-combining; (2) process orientation with emphasis on composing and cognition (as distinguishable from the traditional focus on product); (3) reactionary measures against certain methodologies labeled traditional grammar, representing a position somewhere between a reluctant acceptance and a mild condemnation of grammar as a tool of composition instruction. (Thirty-one references are attached.) (KEH)

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Teaching English in Open Admissions Environments of Higher Education: A Context for Contemporary Practice

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Currently, systems of higher education are precisely at the nexus of convergent forces which had their origins in widely disparate places and times, but which came together and then combined their effects to shape the character of contemporary approaches to higher education.

There is every reason to believe--indeed, there are already signs--that these forces are evolving, becoming separate, and proceeding on divergent courses to some unknown and unpredictable consequences in the future. In a 1979 obituary written on the untimely death of Mina Shaughnessy, Janet Emig included the following comments concerning evidence that the forces which helped to shape open admissions policies in modern higher education are evolving and proceeding on divergent tracks:

> Mina lived long enough to watch at CUNY [City University of New York], her university, what many of us are watching at our own--the quite systematic dismantlement of what she had so laboriously built, for which she may have quite literally given her life. She was even asked to participate in the demise and destruction; for the Savage Seventies are nothing if not thorough in

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> trying to divest us of our most hard-won beliefs and actions.
>
> There is, I believe, only one adequate and appropriate memorial to Mina: that we enact her courage; that we fight the current retreat--no, rout--into the elitist irresponsibility of earlier decades, where once again we agree to teach only those who can learn without our active and imaginative efforts; back to those haemophilic responses to "what is knowledge" and "who shall have access to that knowledge?" Mina truly believed, without sentiment, in the republic as the shining city on the hill. And she would undoubtedly agree with many of us that unless, as a community, we reverse ourselves and the direction that our schools, colleges, and universities are currently taking, this country is truly no longer morally habitable. (Emig, 1979, pp. 37-38)

The changes occurring in the "Savage Seventies" characterized by Emig as irresponsible and a retreat into elitism are there for anyone to find. James Miller (1971), writing in a compilation of essays titled Higher Education for Everybody? describes some of these changes and suggests some unanswered questions these changes prompt:

> Nineteen seventy marks the end of a twenty-five year period in American higher education during which the outstanding characteristic has been unprecedented growth. Nineteen seventy also marks the beginning of an era. The precise characteristics of the new era are not clear, but some of the environmental factors that will shape it are discernable. From these can be inferred alternative policy lines available to American society as it responds to the social goal of equality of opportunity through equal access to higher education for "all who can benefit by it." The question "Who needs higher education?" is key to understanding the past and will be central to policy development in the decade that is upon us.

> If the 1945-70 period provides a single guideline for planners of the future, it is that change in educational institutions is more likely to occur as the result of the interaction of many elements of society than as a straight-line projection of the present or as the orderly carrying-out of a long-range, preconceived plan of action. Thus, the long-range social goal of equality of opportunity as expressed in the demand for higher education for everybody will be met only as we can satisfactorily understand what forces we are dealing with today and adapt our responses accordingly. (pp. 94-95)

Present concerns are with consequences of certain historical processes as well as with the forces which shaped those processes. Of all the multitude of forces which affected the form and function of the higher education today, none has had more demonstrable consequences than those forces which shaped the evolution of the teaching of English. This article examines certain aspects of both the historical evolution and the present-day manifestations of these forces. It is a matter of attempting to understand "where we are," but it is more than that; it is also a matter of attempting to understand "why we are where we are."

The Teaching of English

Universal higher education demonstrates intensely and forcibly to everyone concerned at all levels what informed educators and researchers have been saying for years: that elementary and secondary education is not doing its job; that far too many students moving from secondary to post-secondary schools are inadequately prepared to cope with the

academic demands of higher education. Indeed, if their secondary education is terminal, many of them are not even prepared to cope with the demands of everyday life. This is generally true across the curricular spectrum, but it is particularly true in the basic survival skills of English grammar and writing. And there is a plentitude of blame to share for this sorry state of affairs.

Wechsler (1977) ascribes some of the blame this way:

> The deficiencies in college preparation, evident not only in open admissions students but even in students with above average high school records [has been blamed on] "the simplistic spoken style of television," poorly qualified teachers, overcrowded classes, and even on structural linguistics, which urges the superiority of spoken to written language forms. The contemporary secondary school curriculum cannot go blameless; in the 1950's the United States Commissioner of Education commented that the teaching of English was so poor that it threatened the nation's entire educational system. (pp. 296-297)

That was in the 1950's. How much did things change in the subsequent two decades? According to Wechsler, not much. Wechsler's assignment of blame is somewhat gentle when viewed in the context of other authors writing on the same subject, such as the one which follows. Simon, in his published work, Paradigms Lost: Reflections on Literacy and its Decline (1980), assigned blame in what can best be described as unequivocal style:

> Why was language better in those days [1940's]? And what started it on its downhill course? For one thing, standards in the schools were higher because education had not yet been dealt the four great body blows:

1. The student rebellion of 1968, which, in essence, meant that the students themselves became the arbiters of what subjects were to be taught, and grammar, by jingo, was not one of them.

2. The notion that in a democratic society, language must accommodate itself to the whims, idiosyncracies, dialects, and sheer ignorance of underprivileged minorities, especially if these happened to be black, Hispanic, and, later on, female or homosexual.

3. The introduction of more and more incompetent English teachers, products of the new system, of ever fancier techniques of not teaching English, for which, if the methods involved new technologies and were couched in the appropriately impenetrable jargon, grants could be readily obtained.

4. Television--the nonlanguage and aboriginal grammar of commercials, commentaries, sports announcers, athletes, assorted celebrities,and just about anyone on that word-mongering and word-mangling medium that sucks in victims far more perniciously than radio ever did. (p. xiv)

But, even with this, Simon is not finished placing the blame where he feels the blame should fall:

> . . . the National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE],a body so shot through with irresponsible radicalism, guilt-ridden liberalism, and asinine trendiness as to be, in my opinion, one of the major culprits--right up there with television--in the sabotaging of linguistic standards. (Simon, 1980, p. 45)

According to sources such as those cited in the foregoing, that is "where we are." "Why we are where we are" remains to be answered, and it is the purpose of this part of this study to attempt to answer that question by examining the recent history of the evolution of the

teaching of English and the forces which shaped that evolution. The outcome of the study of these forces will serve to assist those educators and administrators responsible for designing English curricula in understanding "what forces we are dealing with . . . and adapt our responses accordingly" (Miller, 1971).

In this examination of the manner in which the teaching of English evolved, it proved to be difficult to identify a point in time--or period of time--at which or during which educators began to think of the teaching of English in primary and secondary schools and the teaching of English in postsecondary schools as discrete functions. This could be because this notion represents a perspective which did not come to full maturity until the growth and accessibility of higher education forced secondary schools to devise and implement the dual concept of "terminal" and "college preparatory" English instruction. It could also be because the notion represents a perspective that is still not generally accepted throughout the academic community. During most of its early history, the teaching of English was based upon a serial acquisition of language skills progressing from a learning of basic English grammar skills at the elementary school level (a level which was previously and appropriately called "Grammar School") to the refinement and application of those skills--with emphasis on reading,

studying, and "appreciating" the great works of literature--at progressively higher educational levels (Seely, 1933).

The history of the teaching of English does not precisely fix in time the trend away from a serial acquisition of English language skills and the correlative trend toward an episodic acquisition of basic and applied skills at progressively higher levels of complexity and sophistication; however, the history does provide insights into when and why some of the causal forces relating to these trends began to find expression. Certainly, one such causal force was the attempt by certain educators to question both the value of formal English grammar instruction and the central position such instruction occupied in school curricula.

As early as 1906, Franklin Hoyt, the then Assistant Superintendent of Indianapolis schools, writing in Teachers College Record, urged a reevaluation of formal English grammar instruction to determine whether or not such instruction should continue to occupy its exalted position within the elementary school curriculum. Hoyt stated his premise for this reevaluation in these terms:

> One of the urgent educational problems of the day concerns the need of unburdening the schools of all subject-matter that might wisely be eliminated because of its relative unimportance to educational material, thus making it possible to give adequate attention to subjects and activities

> found to be of sufficient value to be retained, or hereafter introduced into the schools. (Hoyt, 1906, p. 1)

In describing the general attitudes relative to the providing of formal instruction in English grammar, Hoyt classified all of those expressing an opinion into the following groups:

1. those who believe in teaching no formal grammar in the elementary school;
2. those who would have grammar taught as a distinct regular subject;
3. those who would have it taught only incidentally in connection with the language work (Hoyt, 1906, p. 6).

Hoyt made it clear in his writing that he was a passionate member of the first group he identified. He contended that there was no rational basis for the study of English grammar in elementary schools either as an instrument for disciplining young minds or for preparing students to study other languages in advanced grades (Hoyt, 1906, p. 9). Neither, he argued, did the study of English grammar contribute to understanding the English language, because English grammar, structurally based as it is upon Greek and Latin grammars, is poorly adapted to the study of the English language, an essentially uninflected and "grammarless tongue" (Hoyt, 1906, p. 11).

Hoyt developed, administered, graded, and evaluated the results of an examination "to determine what relation a knowledge of grammar bears to the ability to use good

English and to interpret language" (Hoyt, 1906, p. 14). The first part of Hoyt's examination was a forty-minute exercise in composition on a subject predetermined by him. This was followed by two tests, one on grammar and the other on the power of interpretation, administered consecutively. Each of these tests was based upon Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." The conclusions Hoyt derived from the examination results were manifold, but the conclusions were condensed into the following statement by Hoyt:

> Our examination of the principal arguments in favor of the teaching of grammar in the elementary school has led to the inevitable conclusion that the subject as generally taught is not of sufficient value to deserve the place it commonly occupies in the elementary curriculum (Hoyt, 1906, p. 22).

This was a conclusion that was to echo down through the years and find its ultimate expression in the 1960's and 1970's.

Seven years later, in 1913, Louis Rapeer, writing in the Journal of Educational Psychology, described his verification of Hoyt's test results. Rapeer's apparent predisposition to embrace Hoyt's conclusions did, however, put Rapeer's objectivity at risk. For example, in summing up Hoyt's questioning of the teaching of English grammar as a means of providing discipline for young minds and of preparing the way for the study of other languages, Rapeer

stated the following:

> Here again, Mr. Hoyt's arguments seem to be sound and based upon well-known facts. The many studies of attendance, retardation, elimination, and the like, which have been made since 1906 seem to bear out his conclusions. We can, at least, tentatively grant him so much (Rapeer, 1913, p. 127).

Rapeer concluded his evaluation of Hoyt's examination processes and results with the following: "These two tests and the careful consideration of the other values thought to exist in the teaching of formal grammar to elementary pupils seem to take away much of the support the subject now has" (Rapeer, 1913, p. 131).

Subsequent investigation by Asker as reported in a 1923 edition of School and Society, and by Segal and Barr as reported in a 1926 edition of the Journal of Educational Research reached the same general conclusions as derived by earlier investigators such as Hoyt and Rapeer. Asker reported on the results of four tests developed by Professor Starch and administered to several hundred freshman students at the University of Washington. The test results led Asker to conclude as follows:

> The facts in this investigation show, then, that knowledge of formal grammar influences ability to judge grammatical correctness of a sentence and ability in English composition only to a negligible degree. As the number of cases involved is large enough to be a fair representation of conditions in general, we may therefore be justified in the conclusion that time spent upon formal grammar in the elementary school is wasted as far as the majority of students is concerned.

Segal and Barr (1926) reported on tests in formal and applied grammar administered to more than one thousand sophomores and juniors in a Long Beach, California, senior high school. In this instance, the test results led Segal and Barr to state as follows: "The conclusion which may be fairly drawn from the study seems to be that formal grammar has no immediate value so far as applied English grammar is concerned" (Segal & Barr, 1926, p. 402).

Considering all of the bad press formal English grammar instruction had been receiving over the years, it is not surprising that enterprising teachers of the English language began to develop and to experiment with various techniques for teaching the English language without including formal instruction in English grammar. One such pioneer in these early curriculum modifications was Ellen Frogner, a member of the English department at the Chicago Teachers College. Writing in a 1939 edition of The English Journal, Frogner reported on her Grammar Approach Versus Thought Approach in Teaching Sentence Structure. Her description of the "Thought Approach" experiment was as follows:

> The aim was to compare the improvement made by pupils who were directed to approach problems of sentence structure entirely from the standpoint of the adequate expression of thought with the improvement made by pupils who, besides having their attention directed to the clear expression of thought, were also given the drill needed to ensure an understanding of the grammatical

> construction of the sentence. In other words, the important point is that while some of the thought approach was included in the grammar classes, no grammar was used in the classes taught according to the thought method, where the underlying principle was the clear, effective expression of ideas (Frogner, 1939, p. 519).

In her experiment, Frogner included such fundamentals of sentence structure as recognition of the sentence, coordination and subordination of ideas in clauses, and subordination of ideas in phrases. She reported mixed results with some slight advantage accruing to the "thought approach." Irrespective of her mixed results, however, Frogner unhesitatingly drew and expressed the following conclusion:

> Results of the study, therefore, lend no support to the claims made for grammar as being essential to improvement in sentence structure. On the contrary, since the experiment demonstrates that an emphasis upon thought is effective in improving details of usage and style, it makes evident the value of such an approach in the whole problem of fostering ability in speaking and writing--an approach wherein the major emphasis in the improvement of ability in language coincides with the inherent purpose of language as a means of expressing ideas (Frogner, 1939, p. 526).

Here, then, many years ago, were to be found harbingers of a movement which was to become in the 1960's and 1970's a widespread--though far from universal--revolt against what has come to be labeled "traditional grammar."

In the teaching of English, Frogner--like her predecessors and like her immediate and more recent successors--was ever ready to promulgate new solutions and

to attempt new regimens to facilitate the teaching of English. More often than not, their concern was with, quite naturally, the teaching of English grammar and its derived skills so necessary to competency in writing. Since this readiness to attempt new solutions to an old problem ranks high on the list of forces which shaped the evolution of the teaching of English, an examination of some of its manifestations and consequences is critical to this study. Using the 1958 Report of the Dartmouth Study of Student Writing as a referent, Kitzhaber (1963) described some of these solutions and their consequences this way:

> Teaching young people to write well has always proved so frustratingly difficult, and the methods used so time-consuming and laborious for teacher and student alike, that to many people in this country the problem has seemed to be a kind of standing affront to the American reputation for efficiency. Surely, they have thought, there must be some easy, quick, and fairly painless way to do the job; and they have therefore looked eagerly if often naively for pat solutions. Not surprisingly, a great many alleged panaceas for teaching writing have been suggested in the past, especially in the last seventy-five years, since the Nation's schools and colleges have been firmly committed to the ideal of trying to educate as many young people as possible. For the longing to find an easy answer becomes urgent in direct proportion to the size of school and college enrollments: the more students there are, the more desperate the problem seems to become. Although, as it has happened, none of these "solutions" has really proved to solve anything, it is instructive to review some of them so as to get a little perspective on those that are being urged on us today (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 73).

In his review of certain of these "solutions," Kitzhaber began with a description of the process during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century when students were made to memorize "Laws of Discourse" in the mistaken belief that this would discipline their mental faculties and cause them to become good writers without having to write very much (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 73).

The next "solution" he described came late in the nineteenth century at which time teachers of English believed and practiced the theory that only in reading good literature could one learn to write well. These same teachers attempted to discredit rhetoric and grammar as "barren formulas" not worth wasting time over (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 74).

Then came a three to four decade period during which "correctness" was hailed as "the supreme virtue in composition," and instruction in composition was dominated by exercises in grammar, usage, and sentence diagramming. Kitzhaber added that, "When it became clear that these activities were having no perceptible effect on the ability of students to write good prose, the principal result was to discredit the study of grammar" (Kitzhaber, 1963, p.74).

Kitzhaber then described how, in the early 1940's, general semantics was being hailed as the answer to the problem, and college freshmen studied the "abstraction

ladder" and learned that a "cow is not a cow is not a cow" (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 74).

It was in the mid-1940's that the total "communication skills" course became the "solution," and, until disillusionment set in in late 1940's and the technique began a rapid decline, students studied reading, writing, speaking, and listening as a total package and as the only rational way in which to learn English (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 74).

At this point in his discourse, Kitzhaber expressed his evaluation of the effects this repetitive cycle of "solutions" and their consequences might be having on teachers of English:

> Faced with this long and discouraging record of unsuccessful nostrums, English teachers might be expected to be somewhat wary of glamorous new solutions to the problem of teaching students to write. Probably most of them are, but some appear as optimistic of ultimate solutions as ever (Kitzhaber, 1963, pp. 74-75).

After this observation, Kitzhaber departed from historical referents and wrote of "solutions" and their consequences, some of which remain a part of and continue to evolve within English language pedagogy as it exists today. Though proven wrong by subsequent events, Kitzhaber began by stating that structural linguistics is one such solution, that it is more than a fad, and that it is rapidly gaining converts (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 75). He examined structural

linguistics in the context of "traditional" grammar:

> What is structural linguistics and what are its claims to superiority over the kind of language study that is customarily found in schools and in college freshman English courses? The English grammar found today in most school handbooks assumed its present form in the eighteenth century, when the increasing fluidity of social classes created a demand for manuals that would enable people newly risen to a higher social level to acquire new habits of dress and accustom themselves to a new standard of living. The books that then appeared . . . were written by men who had little if any knowledge of earlier history of the language, who were not and indeed could not have been expected to be scholars of language in the modern sense . . .. When these authors took up the task of writing grammars of English, not surprisingly they turned to Latin for a model, the most perfect language they knew and the one that enjoyed the highest esteem in learned circles .... In their view, English grammar as it should be would resemble Latin grammar as much as possible. It is substantially this grammar and this view of language that have dominated school instruction in English for the last 200 years. Most current textbooks, especially in the lower schools, are in this tradition--a tradition that has no defenders today among reputable students of the language and that has had none for many years (Kitzhaber, 1963, pp. 76-77).

Within that contextual framework, Kitzhaber described these similarities between structural grammar and traditional grammar:

> There are overlapping areas between structural grammar and the traditional grammar of the school books; they are not totally different systems. Both deal with inflections, with parts of speech, with phrasal and clausal structures, with kinds of sentences. The very real difference between them rises from radically different premises and methodologies (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 77).

Kitzhaber described structural linguists as being "primarily interested in discovering and describing as concisely and accurately as possible the interrelationships and patterns which make up the intricate structure of languages" (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 77). This interest includes a regard of the spoken language as primary, but the structural linguist does not disparage the written form of the language. While recognizing the primacy of the spoken form of the language, the linguist also recognizes the importance of its written form and the marked ways in which the two forms differ.

Kitzhaber then described some of the resistance being met by structural linguistics. Some of this he attributed to inertia, to prejudice, or simply to lack of information. Some of it, though, was coming from advocates of another scientific system of language study, the "transformation" grammar introduced by Chomsky in 1957 in his book, Syntactic Structures (p. 80). More is said about this subject of transformation grammar later in this study.

Concerning this intellectual conflict between "structural linguists" and "transformationists," Kitzhaber has this to say:

> When one considers the argument now going on between structuralists and transformationists, as well as the continuing arguments among structuralists themselves as they try to standardize their terminology and methods, the present situation of English grammar admittedly

> looks confusing. If the study of English grammar is in such a state of turmoil and change, some people may say, perhaps we had better stay with the good old-fashioned grammar of the handbooks until things have settled down and we can know which group is right. Unfortunately, if one accepts the premise that grammar deserves to be taught at all, such a policy will hardly serve. The clock can neither be turned back nor permanently stopped (Chomsky, 1957, p. 81).

Finally, Kitzhaber, as long ago as 1963, expressed his view of a circumstance concerning the teaching of English that has long since become an accepted fact of life in the community college system. The consequences of that circumstance underlie the entire purpose of this study:

> The number of young people who want to attend college is expanding at a considerably faster rate than are freshman class enrollments at four-year colleges and universities. As a result, most colleges can now be more selective in their choice of applicants. Even those colleges that still accept all comers find their rate of expansion limited by facilities and staff. But most four-year institutions have either raised their entrance requirements or imposed such requirements for the first time: if barred by statute from imposing entrance requirements, they are finding other ways to identify poor students ahead of time and dissuade them from enrolling. One of the most important influences, of course, is the proliferation of junior colleges throughout the nation, which are siphoning off many of the weaker students. It is important to recognize that the sharp decline of remedial English courses in four-year colleges and universities does not signify a phenomenal rise in intellectual force among the younger generation, nor does it mean that the high schools have at last solved the problem of teaching all students to write well. The students who used to populate remedial English courses in the colleges and universities are still with us, but most of them now appear to be going to junior colleges instead of to more selective institutions (Kitzhaber, 1963, p. 94).

It is not the purpose of this study to investigate in detail new or novel techniques and methodologies in English instruction except to the degree required to determine if such techniques or methodologies represent a significant force--or are ancillary to such a force--shaping the evolution of the teaching of English.

One such technique and methodology of English instruction, transformation grammar (since renamed transformational grammar), was noted earlier in this study.

Another such methodology is the "process" (as distinguishable from the "product") method of teaching English composition.

A third is neither a technique nor a methodology. Instead, it can be more accurately labeled a revolt against certain techniques and methodologies. It is the "revolt against what has been labeled traditional grammar" alluded to earlier in this study.

First, a brief examination of transformational grammar follows. The data immediately following were extracted from Transformational Grammar and the Teacher of English authored by Thomas (1965) and are presented here in serial form for clarity.

♦ Transformational grammar was derived from linguistic research and from theories related thereto. Noam Chomsky,

Professor of Linguistics at MIT, brought the technique into prominence in the 1957 publication, Syntactic Structures.

♦ Transformational grammar is a "scientific grammar" in that it involves the way in which linguists look at grammar in an attempt to make it logical, complete, and self-consistent.

♦ A "pedagogical grammar" involves the way in which teachers look at a grammar in an attempt to teach it in a coherent way. All pedagogical grammar must be derived from scientific grammar.

♦ The term "transformational grammar" is imprecise, but could be made more precise if it were to be renamed "transformational generative grammar," for the following reasons:

> A generative grammar is one that contains a collection of symbols (as in English) including words and punctuation marks and a list of rules for combining these symbols in various ways to produce every possible sentence. These rules make it possible for any native speaker of the language to evaluate any sentence in the language for its correctness. This includes sentences that have never been written before, and once created (generated), are completely new and novel. A "transformation" is a rule which governs the rearranging of various elements which occur within a sentence.

♦ From the foregoing, a general definition of transformational (generative) grammar can be derived:

> A combination of the rules and symbols of English which both controls and explains:

1. The generation of any possible sentence in written English.

2. The order of the elements within that sentence.

♦ Transformational grammar involves four basic sentence types defined according to the type of verb which occurs in each. The basic sentence types are called "kernels." All other sentence types are called "non-kernels" or derived sentences.

♦ The graphic representation of transformational grammar is a diagram called the "branching tree diagram." The branching tree diagram of transformational grammar is similar to the diagramming of traditional grammar instruction, but, given a sentence that is not structurally ambiguous (allowing for only one interpretation), there is, in transformational grammar, only one way of diagramming it. This was never true for diagramming techniques in traditional grammar.

♦ A branching tree diagram can be developed for any given sentence that will depict either the surface structure or the deep structure of that sentence. If the surface structure is depicted in the diagram, the diagram is similar in purpose--but not in appearance--to the diagrams of traditional diagraming. If the deep structure is depicted, the diagram is useful only to linguists or to individuals

who have a reason to look beyond the surface structure of the sentence (Owen, 1965).

With the introduction of transformational generative grammar into English language pedagogy, numerous individuals began to investigate its processes and consequences. Writing in a 1966 Research Report of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), two such investigators, Bateman and Zidonis, reported on the results of The Effect of a Study of Transformational Grammar on the Writing of Ninth and Tenth Graders conducted in the University School of the Ohio State University.

Bateman and Zidonis (1966) attempted their study because, in their words, "a logical approach to the study of composition has become available" (p. 2). This "logical approach" was transformation generative grammar, which they described as "in essence a representation of the psychological process of producing sentences" (Bateman & Zidonis, 1966, p. 2).

For the study, they developed an instrument that would assess the grammatical quality of two kinds of sentences, kernel and complex (derived), and they provided all of the transformational rules for the various grammatical operations required. In describing the purposes of their two-year study, Bateman and Zidonis stated that they sought answers to these four questions:

1. Can high school pupils learn to apply the transformational rules of generative grammar in their writing?
2. Can their repertoire of grammatical structures be increased by a study of generative grammar?
3. To what extent will the proportion of well-formed sentences increase in the pupil writing over the two-year period?
4. What kinds of transformational errors will occur in pupil writing and to what extent will such errors increase or diminish over the two-year period? (Bateman & Zidonis, 1966 p. 3)

Briefly stated, the conclusions they derived from the study were as follows:

1. That high school students can learn the principles of generative grammar.

2. That this knowledge enables them to increase significantly the proportion of well-formed sentences they produce.

3. That this knowledge enables students to reduce occurrences of error in their writing.

4. That an understanding of the process enables students to write more grammatically (Bateman & Zidonis, 1966, p. 39).

Approximately three years after the Bateman-Zidonis study, John Mellon of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, writing in yet another NCTE Research Report, took the Bateman-Zidonis study to task and reported on his own studies in the subject area in an essay titled, Transformational Sentence-Combining: A Method for Enhancing the Development of Syntactic Fluency in English Composition

(1969). In his essay, Mellon criticized Bateman and Zidonis for the manner in which they stated their basic hypotheses, for the focus of their study, for their selection of target and control populations, for their method of computing structural complexity, and for their interpretation of results (Mellon, 1969, pp. 11-13). In spite of this extensive criticism, however, Mellon was able to state that, as a result of Bateman and Zidonis's study, ". . . it would seem that the transformational grammar unequivocally accomplished what was hypothesized for it, namely, it accelerated the normal growth of sentence complexity" (Mellon, 1969, p. 11).

In his own study involving 250 seventh grade students over a period of one academic year and involving the combining of separate kernel sentences into single statements in order to improve the students' "syntactic fluency" (Mellon, 1969, p. v.), he purports to have corrected the deficiencies that he found in the Bateman-Zidonis study. He broadly describes his own study as follows:

> The experiment began with the observation that the sentence structure of ordinary pupil writing becomes increasingly diversified, or elaborated, as the student matures. This diversification is customarily looked upon as growth. The question I have asked was whether such growth could be enhanced by sentence combining practice occasioning the pseudo-production of sentences more complex in structure than those

> characteristic of the students' current writing (Mellon, 1969, p. 1).

Although Mellon confessed that his chosen seventh grade population was too early an age for some of the operations required, he nonetheless drew the following conclusion for the investigation: "The experimental subjects underwent the extra growth in syntactic fluency hypothesized for them" (Mellon, 1969, pp. 70-71).

In 1971, Frank O'Hare of Florida State University published a dissertation with the title, The Effect of Sentence-Combining Practice Not Dependent on Formal Knowledge of a Grammar on the Writing of Seventh Graders. Two years later, when a synopsis of this dissertation was published as Sentence Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction in an NCTE Research Report, the study was termed ". . . the first major test of sentence-combining methodology in a relatively pure form . . ." (O'Hare, 1973, p. vi.).

According to O'Hare, his study sought answers to these questions:

> 1. Would seventh graders who practiced a new kind of sentence-combining exercise that was in no way dependent on their formal knowledge of a grammar write compositions that could be described as syntactically different from those written by students quite similar to them in ability who were not exposed to such sentence-combining practice?

2. If there were syntactic differences in their writing, could these differences be called differences in maturity?

3. Would the students who practiced the sentence-combining write compositions that would be judged better in overall quality?

4. What would be the curricular implications of these findings? (O'Hare, 1973, p. 2)

O'Hare described his study as "being in the tradition of previous linguistic research on the relationship between grammar study and improvement in writing . . ." (O'Hare, 1973, p. 2). He added that the study relied on transformational theory with the sentence-combining exercise written out by students as being entirely dependent on a theory of generative grammar (O'Hare, 1973, p. 2).

In his essay, O'Hare described his examination of both the Bateman-Zidonis and the Mellon studies, and he concluded this examination as follows:

> It is clear from the evidence of the studies surveyed . . . that there is, contrary to the findings of the many traditional-grammar writing studies, a very real connection between a certain kind of language study and writing. Recent experiments have effected change in student writing behavior. The experimental groups wrote sentences that were syntactically more mature (O'Hare, 1973, p. 18).

O'Hare concluded his essay with the following:

> Given the design features of the present study, it seems reasonable to attribute the superior performance of the experimental group to the experimental treatment. For these reasons it has been judged that sentence-combining practice that is in no way dependent on formal knowledge of

> grammar has a favorable effect on the writing of seventh graders (O'Hare, 1973, p. 68).

And, finally, remarking on the implications of this study in sentence-combining, O'Hare wrote as follows:

> With the threat of grammatical failure removed, the developing writer can get on with solving sentence-structure problems and confidently face the real issue--that of balancing form and idea in any given rhetorical situation (O'Hare, 1973, p. 76).

In the period of the late 1960's and the early 1970's, enough was learned about transformational grammar and sentence-combining to stimulate various authors to produce a variety of texts on composition through combining syntactical structures. Some of the texts were less-than-successful. Others were well-received and achieved an acceptable level of success. One such text, published in 1982 in its second edition form, was The Writer's Options: Combining to Composing. As described by the authors--Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg--the idea for the text evolved from research conducted in 1976 involving some 300 Miami University freshmen. In the authors' words, the form of the research was as follows:

> . . . a controlled research study designed to test the effectiveness of two teaching methods in improving writing quality. Half of the students, following a conventional approach, read and analyzed essays from a college reader and worked closely with a standard college rhetoric. The other half approached all aspects of writing--from diction and sentence structure to tone, coherence, and thesis development--exclusively through

> practice in sentence combining (Daiker, Kerek, & Morenberg, 1982, p. x).

The authors described how, after 15 weeks, the sentence-combining students wrote original compositions judged to be superior to those written by conventionally-trained students.

Although many research reports and instructional texts exist in the subject areas, these additions to English language pedagogy--transformational generative grammar and its derived auxiliary, sentence-combining--have yet to be measured in terms of ultimate effect on the teaching of developmental English.

A second technique of English instruction this study examined as having the potential to affect the teaching of developmental English at the community college level is the "process" method of teaching English composition. One of the earlier advocates of this technique was Janet Emig who, in 1971, produced an essay on the subject. Before examining that essay, however, consider the following extract from an "Introduction" written by Donovan and McClelland for the publication, Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition, published in 1980 by the NCTE. Donovan and McClelland's comments provided a meaningful perspective for this study's examination of the process method of teaching English composition.

In making the point that the principal reason writing instruction is changing from the traditional (product oriented) techniques of the past to the process orientation of today, they wrote as follows:

> A paradigm [a theoretical model] holds sway in a profession when most of its members share the same values, recognize the same problems, and agree on similar solutions. But in time, unexplained violations of the model, or anomalies, may subvert the paradigm; questions are raised which have no meaning in the old paradigm. Practitioners must then seek new answers, which lead toward the development of another paradigm. Sometimes several paradigms compete for supremacy over a discipline until one emerges preeminent (Donovan & McClelland, 1980, "Introduction").

Donovan and McClelland went on to say that, until recently, attention to the product has sustained the field of composition. Now, we are in the middle of a paradigm shift caused by, among other things, the weak correlation between grammar instruction and writing ability, ethnocentric dialects, alienation of students, etc. The consequence is a movement wherein the process becomes the focus in the field of composition.

Turning now to the essay by Emig on the process method of teaching English composition, the essay is titled <u>The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders</u>, and it was published in 1971 as an NCTE Research Report. In an Introduction to Emig's essay, the following statement was included:

> This report describes an expedition into new territory, an investigation of the writing <u>process</u>. This is an area hitherto almost

> untouched by researchers in written composition who by and large have focused their attention upon the written product (Emig, 1971, p. v.).

Emig's study involved an examination of the composing process of twelfth-grade students. For the study, she employed a case study method (Emig, 1971, pp. 1-3), and she formulated four hypotheses concerning the writing behaviors of such students, as follows:

1. Twelfth-grade writers engage in two modes of composing--reflexive and extensive--characterized by processes of different lengths with different clustering of components.

2. These differences can be ascertained and characterized through having twelfth-grade writers compose aloud--that is, attempting to externalize their processes of composing.

3. In the composing processes of twelfth-grade writers, an implied or explicit set of stylistic principles governs the selection and arrangement of components--lexical, syntactic, rhetorical, imagaic.

4. For twelfth-grade writers extensive writing occurs chiefly as a school-sponsored activity; reflexive, as a self-sponsored activity (Emig, 1971, p. 3).

Emig reported that the data obtained from the study confirmed her hypotheses, and she discussed at length the implications of the study results. It is important to note that she drew particular attention to the hypothesis concerning composing aloud (Emig, 1971, p. 4). This was to see further examination as the "thinking-aloud protocol" of later investigators.

One feature of Emig's study that was to have profound implications for subsequent investigators examining the composing process was her outline of the process in serially discrete operations. Investigators following Emig continued her work in this area attempting to further define and refine the operations implicit in the composing process.

One such investigator, Sondra Perl, writing in a 1979 issue of Research in the Teaching of English, reported the findings of a research study in the composing processes of five unskilled college writers. Perl's research addressed the following three questions:

1. How do unskilled writers write?
2. Can their writing processes be analyzed in a systematic, replicable manner?
3. What does an increased understanding of their processes suggest about the nature of composing in general and the manner in which writing is taught in the schools? (Perl, 1979, p. 317)

Perl's intention was, through observation of and consultation with the unskilled writers, to develop an instrument for ascertaining the frequency, importance, and place of the movements that occur during the process of composing (Perl, 1979, p. 318). Although the results of her study were numerous, she identified the following as a major finding:

> All of the students displayed consistent composing processes; that is, the behavioral subsequences prewriting, writing, and editing appeared in

> sequential patterns that were recognizable across writing sessions and across students (Perl, 1979, p. 328).

This consistency of behavior enabled Perl to devise a coded charting method for recording and evaluating student composing processes.

Although Perl's method of graphically charting and representing the sequence of student behaviors might have limited appeal to teachers of English composition, one implication that Perl derived from the research appears worthy of consideration by everyone involved in developmental English education. She expressed this implication as follows:

> One major implication of this study pertains to teachers' conceptions of unskilled writers. Traditionally, these students have been labeled "remedial," which usually implies that teaching ought to remedy what is "wrong" in their written products.... More recently, unskilled writers have been referred to as "beginners," implying that teachers can start anew.... Yet this view ignores the highly elaborated, deeply embedded processes the students bring with them. These unskilled college writers are not beginners in a tabula rasa sense, and teachers err in assuming they are. The results of this study suggest that teachers may first need to identify which characteristic components of each student's process facilitate writing and which inhibit it before further teaching takes place. If they do not, teachers of unskilled writers may continue to place themselves in a defeating position: imposing another method of writing instruction upon the students' already internalized processes without first helping students to extricate themselves from the knots and tangles in those processes (Perl, 1979, pp. 333-334).

Another investigator, Sharon Pianko, writing in 1979 issue of Research in the Teaching of English, directed her study at college freshmen, and reported on the results in an essay titled, "A Description of the Composing Processes of College Freshman Writers." In her study, Pianko (1979) tentatively identified (pp. 7-11) what was to become an almost universally accepted axiom about the composing process: that it is not a process of identifiable fixed-order stages; that it involves too much rethinking, replanning, revising, and rewriting to be considered a straight-line process. As Gould of the I.B.M., T.J. Watson Research Center stated in the 1980 publication, Cognitive Processes in Writing, "When one considers alternative psychological models of composition, fixed-order stage models seem to be the straw men" (Gould, 1980, p. 110).

Writing in a December, 1981, issue of College Composition and Communication, Flower and Hayes pursued this line of reasoning further when they developed and produced as essay describing "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." They reject the "stage models of writing" because, in their words, "they model the growth of the written product, not the inner processes of the person producing it" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 367). In the place of the stage models, Flower and Hayes proposed a "cognitive process model" which reflects these four hypotheses concerning the composition

process:

> 1. Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing. . ..
>
> 2. The processes of writing are hierarchically organized, with component processes embedded within other components. . ..
>
> 3. Writing is a goal-directed process. In the act of composing, writers create a hierarchical network of goals, and these in turn guide the writing process. . ..
>
> 4. Writers create their own goals in two key ways: by generating goals and supporting sub-goals which embody a purpose; and, at times, by changing or regenerating their own top-level goals in light of what they have learned by writing. . . (Flower & Hayes, 1981, pp. 366-386).

It is this shift in focus from the composing processes to the cognitive processes (as these relate to written composition) that appears to have dominated research in English composition over the past several years, and researchers agree that, in those years, much has been learned and much has been attempted that might not otherwise have been possible had the focus remained on the written product.

One technique for teaching English composition which can be traced directly to earlier research by Emig (1971), Perl (1979), Pianko (1979), and Flower & Hayes (1981), was suggested by Muriel Harris and described in her essay, "Modeling: A Process Method of Teaching," published in the

January, 1983, issue of College English. As was the case with data on transformational grammar, data from this essay are, for clarity, presented here in serial form:

♦ With the switch from product to process in the teaching of English comes the need for methods to accomplish the following:

1. Teach writing processes,
2. Diagnose problems with the process of composing, and
3. Evaluate the success of process teaching.

♦ Two useful tools to accomplish the preceding, protocol analysis and modeling, are borrowed from the techniques of psychology.

♦ The verbal (or thinking-aloud) protocol is typically used in tutorial settings wherein students are encouraged "to say out loud everything they are thinking as they write" (Harris, 1983, p. 74). This permits the English instructor to explore the thought processes of the student as well as to diagnose problems in composition being verbalized by the student.

♦ As an evaluation tool for measuring the success of process teaching, the verbal protocol permits the direct observation of students "using what they have learned as they compose."

♦ Modeling is a behavior modification technique wherein a behavior of process to be taught is first

demonstrated by an instructor and then copied by a student under the close scrutiny of the instructor. Modeling is frequently employed in concert with the verbal protocol to gain additional insights into student behavior.

♦ Typically, the modeling technique has three facets: the student, the observer of the student behavior, and the behavior or process to be modeled.

♦ Modeling techniques can be used in either tutorial or conference settings; however, modifications to the technique are required when used in conference settings (Harris, 1983, pp. 74-76).

Ann Humes, writing in the Summer, 1983, edition of the Review of Educational Research in an essay titled, "Research in the Composing Process", probably said it best when, in summing up the benefits and consequences of all the recent research in English composition, she wrote as follows:

> The new methodologies have produced important findings without which we would have no authoritative knowledge about the composing process. We are at least indebted to the new methodologies for shifting the focus of research attention more toward the process and away from the product of writing. More substantively, they have enabled us to verify what most competent writers know intuitively about the recursiveness of the process and about the subprocesses of composing (Humes, 1983, pp. 213-214).

Before leaving this examination of the composing process, it is worth considering how one advocate of the process method of teaching English composition views the

situation. Donald Murray, writing in Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition (1980), expressed his advocacy this way:

> The process of making meaning with written language cannot be understood by looking backward from a printed page. Process cannot be inferred from a product any more than a pig can be inferred from a sausage (Murray, 1980, p. 3).

It is too soon to say whether or not the process method of teaching English composition will have enduring effects on English language pedagogy. It is not too soon, however, to state that the internecine conflict going on within the community of English instructors concerning the value of instruction in traditional grammar has already had--and continues to have--significant effects on the techniques and methodologies of English instruction, and vocal advocates representing both sides of the conflict abound.

The teaching of "traditional grammar" has always had its critics, as long ago in fact, as the eighteenth century when English grammar was derived from the Latin. It was not until the 1960's and 1970's that this circumspect criticism erupted into an open and widely publicized philosophical struggle between those who consider the teaching of traditional grammar a complete waste of time, those who consider traditional grammar indispensable to the teaching of English composition, and those whose attitudes concerning

traditional grammar represent positions between these two extremes.

Warfel (1952), writing in his published volume, Who Killed Grammar?, and expressing his dismay at the proliferation of critics of traditional grammar, identifies four basic types of critics of grammar instruction:

- The Logician,
- The Supporter of Usage,
- The Arbiter of Propriety, and
- The Aesthete

Warfel goes on to add that, in the early 1950's, the "supporters of usage" held the dominant position in the NCTE, and he blames these supporters of usage for certain attitudes concerning the teaching of the English language, as follows:

> Grammar as a subject of formal study in American schools has been discredited largely by the students of usage. On the basis of a few alleged unscientific statements in textbooks, the students of usage oversimplified and overdramatized the perennial problem of the maintenance of standards of language conduct . . .. these self-called "descriptive" grammarians have hooted at "prescriptive" grammars and have created in educational circles a thoroughly rebellious attitude toward all formal study of the English language (Warfel, 1952, p. 18).

But, according to Warfel, the blame for these attitudes has to be shared by the linguists:

> The worst feature of the non-sense of the "new" linguistics is its "book burning" quality. By shaking faith in the correctness of a few items in grammars of the English language, these detractors have destroyed faith in every book on the subject. In causing the books to be tossed out of schools, they have also caused the subject of grammar to be discarded from the curriculum (Warfel, 1952, p. 59).

Like Warfel, other authors place part of the blame for the conflict over traditional grammar at the door of the linguists. Tate, in an essay included in a 1970 compilation of essays titled Teaching High School Composition, expressed it this way:

> For well over a decade now, English teachers have been told by linguists, or by other English teachers interested in linguistics, that an objective study of the structure of the English language will help students improve their writing. Most authors of textbooks and journal articles for English teachers seemed to assume that the so-called linguistic approach to writing would somehow work a kind of automatic magic on the compositional abilities of students. When it became increasingly obvious in the early 1960's that this improvement was not occurring, and that students who had memorized phonemic alphabets and drawn Chinese box diagrams were not writing better than they had before, many of the defenders of linguistics very quickly developed a new reson for keeping the structural study of language in the curriculum: language was, they argued, the carrier of our culture, one of the distinguishing traits of our humanity, and, as such, was worthy of study for its own sake. Indeed, the idea that linguistic analysis should be used only as a "tool" in the composition class was now discounted as trivial. Linguistics should take its place alongside such subjects as history, biology, and mathematics as a necessary component in a truly liberal education. . . . to complicate the situation, just as what might be called "the failure of structural grammar in the composition class" was becoming evident and linguists were

> constructing new lines of defense, transformational grammar appeared with a rapidity and force that made the earlier coming of structuralism appear hesitant and timid by comparison.
>
> It was at this point in time, faced with yet another, even stranger kind of grammar, that many composition teachers threw up their hands in despair and turned their thoughts elsewhere. Some, of course, had never "bought" linguistics in the first place. They had remained, and continue to remain, steadfast traditionalists with an unshakable faith in schoolroom grammar and its essential powers (Tate, 1970, pp. 157-159).

Writing in the same compilation of essays from which the preceding was extracted, Sherwood expressed an opposite view on the teaching of grammar. It is, however, a view which stops short of an outright condemnation of traditional grammar.

> It is time to take a look at some of the common distractions which appear in composition courses and substitute themselves for the teaching of composition itself. These distractions are so numerous and are so often resorted to, that one would almost think that a composition teacher would rather do anything than teach his own subject. The substitute which has been doing damage for the longest time is undoubtedly the teaching of grammar . . .. If all composition work is reduced to grammar, and the diagramming of sentences and filling in of exercises replaces actual experience in writing, then grammar ceases to be a tool of composition and becomes a substitute for it (Sherwood, 1970, pp. 65-66).

This notion of grammar displacing some other feature of the teaching of composition and thereby having a negative effect on the teaching of English was not new when Sherwood wrote of it in 1970. In fact, Sherwood's comment is but an

echo of an earlier--and much more widely recognized--statement made in a 1963 NCTE report, Research in Written Composition.

In that report, the authors, Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer included the following statement:

> In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, & Schoer, 1963, pp. 37-38).

Kolln, writing in a 1981 edition of College Composition and Communication published by the NCTE, characterized the preceding statement in this way:

> That famous statement has probably had a more harmful effect on our students these past seventeen years [1963 to 1980] than all the time spent memorizing rules and diagramming sentences ever had. The babies born in 1963 are babies no longer; they are juniors and seniors in high school. That 1963 report has probably affected the education of every one of them. Shortly after its appearance, textbooks on teaching methods began quoting its memorable line. And before long our elementary and secondary English classes were staffed by eager young teachers who believed that teaching grammar was a waste of time--even worse, it was downright harmful (Kolln, 1981, pp. 147-148).

The principal thrust of the remainder of Kolln's essay is concerned with her position that much of the data upon which Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer predicated the widely-known statement were flawed in one or more important

particulars; consequently, the conclusions expressed in the statement were invalid. She added:

> Is there room in the language arts curriculum or in the freshman composition class for grammar study? Certainly. In some classrooms it never left; many teachers have never stopped believing that the teaching of composition and literature can be more effective when they are able to discuss details of syntax with their students (Kolln, 1981, p. 150).

Kolln and others like her comprise a group--which included, prior to her death, Mina Shaughnessy--and represent a position somewhere between a reluctant acceptance and a mild condemnation of grammar as a tool of composition instruction. This position derives from the belief that it is impossible to rationally discuss the mechanics of composition with students unless those students have, at least, learned the terminology of English grammar symbology and syntax. It is the moderating influence of this group which appears to be the most palatable to the widest audience within the English instruction community.

This completes this study's examination of the recent history of the teaching of English, of some of the forces which shaped and are shaping that history, and of certain consequences which might be inferred from the historical evolution of English instruction.

Normally, in a subject this complex, a summary would be in order, but the following statement by Tate (1970) serves quite well to close this study.

The entire situation today can probably best be summarized by taking a glance at the makeup of a typical secondary school English department. In this department, one will find a good many traditionalists who still see linguistics as a mere fad or as one more attempt to dehumanize their field of study. In addition, there will usually be a few hardy structuralists, who have rejected traditional grammar but who have not moved on to transformationalism. A few of the members will probably have been caught up in the recent excitement over rhetoric and will thus display little interest in any variety of grammar. Joining this disparate group will be new teachers, recent college graduates, some of whom will undoubtedly be enthusiastic because of college course work, about transformational grammar. It requires only some such superficial survey to reveal why it is rare to find a secondary school English department whose members can sit down together and construct a sensible curriculum sequence for the teaching of writing (Tate, 1970, pp. 159-160).

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